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REPORT ON THE MEETINGS OF THE MINISTERIAL FOLLOW-UP COMMITTEE ON TRADE AND FINANCE FOR AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT

(A Note by ECA Secretariat)

Table of Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Structure and Terms of Reference of the Committee	1-2	1
II.	Meetings of the Committee	3-6	1
III.	Factors to Determine Whether on not the Committee should be Dissolved	7	2
IV.	Conclusions	8	3

I. STRUCTURE AND TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE COMMITTEE

1. The Ministerial Follow-up Committee on Trade and Finance for African Development was established at the Sixth Session of the Conference of Ministers of Trade which was held in Addis Ababa from 17-20 March 1980. The following are the terms of reference of the Committee:

(a) Monitoring the implementation of the African strategy in the field of International Trade and Finance including intra-African trade and finance as part of the over-all development strategy for Africa.

(b) Co-ordinating, harmonizing and preparing the African position on issues relating to international trade and finance for development.

(c) Reviewing from time to time progress made in the implementation of multilateral agreements between African countries and the outside world in the field of international trade and finance including the second ACP-EEC Lome Convention and UNCTAD's Integrated Programme for Commodities.

2. The following countries were elected as members of the Committee: Algeria, Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Tanzania, Tunisia, Zaire, Zambia. It was understood that other States not members of the Committee would also be welcome to participate at its meetings.

II. MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE

3. Since its inception, the Ministerial Follow-up Committee has met three times. The full information about attendance at the meeting is given in Table I. It will be noted that at the first meeting which was held in Addis Ababa from 9-11 March 1981, there were fourteen (14) member countries present and four (4) other African countries also participated in the meeting. Out of all the countries participating, only six (6) were represented by Ministers.

4. The second meeting of the committee was held in Addis Ababa from 25-28 January 1982. Fourteen (14) member countries were present and two (2) other African countries also participated. Out of the delegations present, there were only three (3) Ministers.

5. The third meeting of the Ministerial Follow-up Committee was held in Addis Ababa from 9-14 May 1984. Since this Committee was requested by the OAU Heads of State and Government to review and assess UNCTAD VI, the Secretariat invited all African countries to participate (as a Committee of the Whole). Thirteen (13) members of the Committee participated at this meeting and of these only two (2) countries were represented by Ministers. There were also twentyone (21) other African countries which participated in the meeting and of these, six (6) were Ministers.

TABLE 1

PARTICIPATION ON THE MINISTERIAL FOLLOW-UP COMMITTEE

Countries Present	First Meeting	Second Meeting	Third Meeting
(1) Members of the Committee	14	14	13
(2) Of these Ministers were:	6	3	2
(3) Other African countries	4	2	21
(4) Of these Ministers were:	-	-	6

6. It will be noted from the above table that the number of members participating dropped during the third meeting. In fact, attendance was made up by representatives from the respective embassies in Addis Ababa. More significantly, the number of ministers participating in the meeting has not only been less than half but has also progressively reduced. It must be stressed that in the opinion of the Secretariat, this does not indicate the lack of interest in the work of the Committee, but genuine financial difficulties and other obligations which makes it difficult for members to participate.

III. FACTORS TO DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT THE COMMITTEE SHOULD BE DISSOLVED

7. Three important factors need to be taken into consideration in determining whether or not the Committee should be dissolved.

(a) Many African countries presently face serious financial problems especially in the foreign exchange sector. Indications show that this is likely to continue for some time in future. The frequency of meetings places additional pressures on such foreign exchange situations. In fact, the low and declining number of Ministers present at such meetings may be an indication of this problem.

(b) Recently, the OAU Heads of State and Government established a Ministerial Steering Committee of Seven African countries to prepare for the economic summit which was held in Addis Ababa in July 1985. The Steering Committee dealt with all economic issues including trade, to be brought before the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government. The Steering Committee's membership is being enlarged to between twelve (12) and fifteen (15) and will be a permanent body of the OAU. Its mandate has also been expanded to include assistance to African countries in international negotiations including UNCTAD sessions.

(c) The ECA Conference of Ministers at its meeting held in April 1985, established the Conference of Ministers of Finance and Governors of Central Banks as the competent body to deal with all monetary and financial issues previously handled by the Ministerial Follow-up Committee on Trade and Development Finance.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

8. In the light of these significant developments, and in view of the financial problems referred to above, the Conference of Ministers of Trade might wish to decide whether or not it is essential to continue the work of the Ministerial Follow-up Committee. It would appear that the mandate of the Ministerial Follow-up Committee has been significantly curtailed. If it is decided that the Committee should continue, the Conference may wish to redefine its terms of reference. Alternatively, the Conference might wish to dissolve it altogether on the understanding that its biennial sessions would always be preceded by a meeting of an Intergovernmental Group of Experts which would prepare recommendations and policy proposals for consideration by the Ministers.

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Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), 11-15 April 1985

COMMISSION ECONOMIQUE POUR L'AFRIQUE

Deuxième réunion du Groupe intergouvernemental d'experts des ministères des banques centrales sur la création d'un fonds monétaire africain

Addis-Abeba (Ethiopie), 11-15 avril 1985

PROVISIONAL LIST OF PARTICIPANTS/
LISTE PROVISOIRE DES PARTICIPANTS

ALGERIA/ALGERIE

Mr. Naas Abdelkrim, Inspecteur général, Banque centrale d'Algérie, Alger

Mr. Aboura Abderrahmane, Conseiller, Ambassade d'Algérie, Addis Ababa

ANGOLA

Mr. Luis Bonfim, Financial expert, Ministry of Finance, Luanda

Mr. Serrão Veiga Carlos, International Finance, Banco Nacional de Angola, Luanda

BENIN

BOTSWANA

Mr. Ditsheso Isaac Mosienyane, Research Officer, Bank of Botswana, Gaborone

BURKINA FASO

BURUNDI

Mr. Habonimana Anselme, Directeur de la trésorerie, Ministère des finances, Burundi

LG/NAIROBI

CAMEROON/CAMEROUN

Mrs. Koung A Bessike, Sous-Directeur du Crédit à la Direction des contrôles économiques et des finances extérieures, Ministère des finances, Yaoundé

CAP-VERDE/CAP-VERT

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC/REPUBLIQUE CENTRAFRICAINE

CHAD/TCHAD

Mr. Taha Salim, Chargé d'affaires, Ambassade du Tchad, Addis-Abeba

COMOROS

CONGO

Mr. Balanda-Miamona Gaston, Directeur des études et de la planification, Ministère des finances et du budget, Brazzaville

DJIBOUTI

EGYPT/EGYPTE

Dr. Ahmed Salem, First Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Finance

Mr. Mohamed Wafik Hosny, Ambassador, Embassy of Egypt, Addis Ababa

Mr. Bishay Sourial Khairy, General Manager, Central Bank of Egypt, Cairo

Mr. Nofal El-Sayed, Embassy of Egypt, Addis Ababa

Mr. Mustafa Abdel Bassit, Embassy of Egypt, Addis Ababa

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

ETHIOPIA/ETHIOPIE

Mr. Legesse Motta, Vice Governor, National Bank of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa

Mr. Samuel Asrat, Deputy Head for External Relations with Foreign Banks, National Bank of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa

Mr. Ibrahim Abdulahi, Head, Monetary and Banking Department, National Bank of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa

GABON

Mrs. Jacqueline Atsame, Directrice des Institutions financières à la Direction générale de l'économie

THE GAMBIA/GAMBIE

Mr. F.E.D. Forster, Under Secretary, Ministry of Finance and Trade, Banjul

Mr. V. Jansen, Senior Economist, Central Bank of the Gambia, Banjul

GHANA

Mr. Peace Ayisi-Okyere, Chief Economic Planning Officer, Ministry of Finance & Economic Planning, Accra

Mr. Manasseh T. Amoako-Atta, Deputy Chief Economist, Bank of Ghana, Accra

Mr. Patrick Djamson, Bank of Ghana, Accra

Mr. Kwabena Asane, First Secretary, Ghana Embassy, Addis Ababa

GUINEA/GUINEE

Mr. Sané Oumar, Directeur-Adjoint chargé de la CEA, Ministère des affaires et de la coopération

Mr. Diawara Dramane, Directeur des services bancaires de la Banque centrale, Banque centrale de la République de Guinée, Conakry

Mr. Kemoko Ghemou, Premier Secrétaire, Ambassade de Guinée, Addis Abeba

GUINEA-BISSAU/GUINEE BISSAU

IVORY COAST/COTE D'IVOIRE

KENYA

LESOTHO

LIBERIA

SOCIALIST PEOPLE'S LIBYAN ARAB
JAMAHIRIYA/LA JAMAHIRIYA ARABE
LIBYENNE POPULAIRE ET SOCIALISTE

Mr. Ali Awidan, Member of the People's Bureau, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Tripoli

MADAGASCAR

MALAWI

Mr. Ian Bononqwe, Divisional Head in Research and Statistics Department, Reserve Bank of Malawi, Lilongwe 3, Malawi

Dr. Mwalwanda Cornelius T., Director of Research and Statistics, Reserve Bank of Malawi, Lilongwe 3 Malawi

Mr. Gomani Alex, Senior Economist, Ministry of Finance, Lilongwe 3, Malawi

MALI

MAURITANIA/MAURITANIE

MAURITIUS/MAURICE

MOROCCO/MAROC

Mr. Thami El-Marki, Inspecteur des finances, Ministère des finances, Rabat

Mr. Ahmed Abaloun, Inspecteur aux Finances, Ministère des finances, Rabat

Mr. Abdelmalek Ouenniche, Directeur, Banque du Maroc, Rabat

MOZAMBIQUE

NIGER

NIGERIA

Mr. Peter A.; Adegbayo, Assistant Director of Planning, Ministry of National Planning, Lagos

Mr. J.O. Aderibigbe, Deputy Director of Research, Central Bank of Nigeria, Lagos

Mrs. T.A. Iremiren, Assistant Director, Federal Ministry of Finance, Lagos

Mr. C.D. Odofin, Central Bank of Nigeria, Lagos

Mr. Olabode Adekoye, Second Secretary, Embassy of Nigeria, Addis Ababa

RWANDA

Mr. Thomas Kigufi, Directeur général du budget, Ministère des finances et de l'économie, Kigali

Mr. Théodore Mpatswenumugabo, Directeur des études et d'évaluation, Ministère des finances et de l'économie, Kigali

Mr. Gérard Niyitegeka, Directeur des études et statistiques, Banque nationale du Rwanda, Kigali

SAO TOME & PRINCIPE

SENEGAL

Mr. Mamadou Ndong, Conseiller technique, Ministère des finances, Dakar

Mr. Philip Tom Wachiaya, Correspondent, Panafrican News Agency, Addis Ababa

SEYCHELLES

Mr. Norman Weber, Fiscal Specialist, Department of Finance, Victoria

SIERRA LEONE

Mr. Gustavus Williams, First Secretary, Sierra Leone Embassy, Addis Ababa

SOMALIA

SUDAN/SOUDAN

Mr. Mustafa Hashim Mohammed, 2nd Secretary, Sudan Embassy, Addis Ababa

SWAZILAND

TOGO

Mr. Dema Codjo, Chargé d'études, Ministère des affaires étrangères, Lomé

Mr. Atabaya Badjala, Chef de la Division des études macro-économiques et conjoncturelles, Ministère du Plan, Lomé

TUNISIA/TUNISIE

Mr. Said Mrabet, Sous-Directeur,des Relations international, Banque centrale de Tunisie, Tunis

Mr. Sifi Naghmouchi, Sous-Directeur, Ministère des finances, Tunis

UGANDA/OUGANDA

Mr. Christopher Kassami, Chief Economist, Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, Kampala

Mr. Vincent E. Edoku, Senior Principal Planning Officer, Bank of Uganda, Kampala

Mr. Julius I.K. Kintu, Banking Officer, Bank of Uganda, Kampala

TANZANIA/TANZANIE

ZAIRE

Mr. Ngandu Tshibuabua, Directeur, Banque du Zaire, Kinshasa

Mr. Kabul Ndiang, Directeur-Adjoint, République du Zaïre, Banque du Zaïre, Kinshasa

H.E. Mr. Waku Yizila, Ambassadeur extraordinaire et plénipotentiaire, Embassade de la République du Zaïre, Addis-Abeba

Mr. Ossay Loba Wawa, Conseiller, Ambassade de la République du Zaïre, Addis-Abeba

ZIMBIA/ZAMBIE

Mr. Godfrey Mbulo, Economic Advisor, Bank of Zambia, Lusaka

Mr. Richard K.E. Chembe, Economist, Bank of Zambia, Lusaka

Mr. George R. Nzala, First Secretary, Zambia Embassy, Addis Ababa

ZIMBABWE

H.E. Dr. I.J. B. Jokonya, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Zimbabwe Embassy, Addis Ababa

Mr. D.C. Chiqiqa, Deputy Ambassador, Zimbabwe Embassy, Addis Ababa

Mr. Tonderai Makoni, Economist, Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, Harare

Mr. Isaac Moyo, First Secretary, Zimbabwe Embassy, Addis Ababa

OBSERVOR/OBSERVATEUR

BANQUE CENTRALE DES ETATS DE L'AFRIQUE DE L'OUEST/CENTRAL BANK OF WEST AFRICAN STATES (BCEAO)

Mr. Emmanuel M. Nana, Adjoint au Directeur des études, BCEAO, Dakar

Mr. Koffi Konan, Fondé de pouvoir, BCEAO, Dakar

BANQUE DES ETATS DE L'AFRIQUE CENTRALE/BANK OF CENTRAL AFRICAN STATES (BEAC)

Mr. Auguste Tene-Koyzoa, Chef d'études, Banque des Etats de l'Afrique centrale, Yaoundé, Cameroun

Mr. Gilbert Ntang, Directeur des analyses monétaires, Banque des Etats de l'Afrique centrale, Yaoundé, Cameroun

Mr. Daniel Kazy-Menga, Sous-Directeur, Banque des Etats de l'Afrique centrale, Brazzaville, Congo

BANQUE OUEST AFRICAINE DE DEVELOPPEMENT/WEST AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (BOAD)

Mr. Aristide Gbenou, Chef de Division, Banque Ouest africaine de développement, Lomé, Togo

Mr. Hyacinthe Yameogho, Chef de Division, Banque Ouest africaine de développement, Lomé, Togo

CENTRAL AFRICAN CLEARING HOUSE/CHAMBRE DE COMPENSATION DE L'AFRIQUE CENTRALE (CACH)

Mr. Toka Nkwenga, Secrétaire exécutif adjoint, Chambre de compensation de l'Afrique centrale, Kinshasa, Zaire

ECOWAS FUND

Mr. David Asamto, Head, Monetary Cooperation Division, ECOWAS FUND, Lagos, Nigeria

SECRETARIAT

AFRICAN CENTRE FOR MONETARY STUDIES/CENTRE AFRICAIN D'ETUDES MONETAIRES (ACMS)

Dr. Abderrahim Omrana, Directeur général adjoint, Centre africain d'études monétaires, Dakar, Sénégal

AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK/BANQUE AFRICAINE DE DEVELOPPEMENT (ADB)

Mr. Basil C. Muzorewa, Senior Economist, African Development Bank, Abidjan, Ivory Coast

Mr. Mohamed M.A. Yassin, Finance Officer, African Development Bank, Abidjan Ivory Coast

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA/COMMISSION ECONOMIQUE POUR L'AFRICQUE (ECA)

Dr. Bingu Wa Mutharika, Officer-in-Charge, International Trade & Finance Division, ECA, Addis Ababa

Dr. Martyn A.P. Ngwenya, Chief, Monetary & Financial Relations Section, ITFD, ECA, Addis Ababa

Dr. Jonathan M. Chileshe, Chief, International Trade Section, ECA, Addis Ababa

Mr. J. Mwase CTNC, International Trade & Finance Division, ECA, Addis Ababa

Mr. S.J.B. Bauna, Monetary & Financial Relations Section, International Trade and Finance Division, ECA, Addis Ababa

Mr. Ahmed Sidya, Monetary & Financial Relations Section, International Trade and Finance Division, ECA, Addis Ababa

Mr. K. Panov, International Trade Section, ITFD, ECA, Addis Ababa

Mr. Genene Zewge, International Trade and Finance Division,ECA, Addis Ababa

INSTITUT AFRICAIN DE DEVELOPPEMENT ECONOMIQUE ET DE PLANIFICATION (IDEP)

Dr. Essam Montasser, Director, IDEP, Dakar, Sénégal

ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY/ORGANISATION DE L'UNITE AFRICAINE (OAU)

Mr. Mbondjim Ngardoumloa, Chef, Monnaie et Finance, Organisation de l'unité africaine, Addis-Abéba

Mr. Charles Kossi Avitor, Chef, Section coopération intrafricaine, Organisation de l'unité africaine, Addis-Abéba

Mr. Frederick Alipui, Acting Chief, Commerce Section, Organization of African Unity, Addis Ababa